

الرياضة بين القيم والهوية: مقارنة سوسيو-انثربولوجية لمشاركة المنتخب المغربي في كأس العالم قطر 2022

*Sport between values and identity. A socio-anthropological
approach on the participation of Moroccan national team in
Qatar World Cup*

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الملخص:

تهدف الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء السوسيو-انثروبولوجي على مشاركة المنتخب المغربي لكرة القدم في كأس العالم قطر 2022. حيث تم العمل على مناقشة بعض المفاهيم والأحداث التي رافقت هذه المشاركة، من قبيل: " النية "، "الهوية"، "التجانس"، و"التماسك الاجتماعي"، ويحاول الباحث شرح هذه المفاهيم وفق سياق إنتاجها الثقافي والاجتماعي المتصل بهذه المشاركة الرياضية القارية، ولتحقيق هدف الدراسة فقد استند الباحث إلى مجموعة من الدراسات والنظريات التي تناولت هذه المفاهيم من وجهات نظر إثنو-مركزية مختلفة، وأوصت الدراسة بمجموعة من التوصيات أبرزها ضرورة تبني مقاربة شمولية تسعى من خلالها الجامعة على الانفتاح أكثر على التخصصات الإنسانية والاجتماعية، مع ضرورة وجود طاقم نفسي اجتماعي، يساعد الطاقم التقني للمنتخب الوطني في الاشتغال على تقريب الهويات والثقافات المتعددة والتواصل مع أسر اللاعبين، بالإضافة إلى تقديم حصص تأطيرية وورشات ثقافية للاعبين الأجانب حتى يتعرفوا عن كثب على الثقافة الأصلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النية، الهوية، التجانس، التماسك الاجتماعي.

Abstract

This theoretical article discusses the participation of Moroccan national football team's in Qatar World Cup 2022 from a socio-anthropological perspective. In this regard, some concepts and events that accompanied this participation were highlighted, such as: intention, identity, homogeneity, social cohesion. In order to achieve this endeavour, this article is guided by a set of studies and theories that establish these concepts from different ethnocentric points of view, which we tried to adapt it to the context of its cultural and social production related to this continental participation. This reading concluded a set of recommendations, most notably: the necessity of having a psychosocial staff, who helps the technical staff on bringing together the multiple identities and cultures and communicating with the families of the players, in addition to provide a coaching sessions and cultural workshops for the foreign players so that they get to know closely the original culture.

Keywords: intention, identity, homogeneity, social cohesion.

1) Introduction

Sport can be defined as a physical and mental activity that aims. On the one hand, to maintain a good physical health. Further, it represents a competitive game that requires systematic training and respect for the game rules. According to Tony Perrottet, the first appearance of competitive sports was attributable to the Greek civilization, which was in the form of a series of sports competitions between representatives of city-states in honor of Zeus, so the competition was ancient in a mythical nature. Consequently, the ancient athletic competition was mythical in its ancient Greek sense. (Perrottet, 2004).

On the basis of what it has just been said, the concept of sports competition moved from its legendary dimension with the Greek civilization, to a new form that is more general and open to other countries. In this article, we worked to shed light on football competitions, especially the participation of the Moroccan national team in Qatar World Cup 2022, and the accompanying emergence of several sociological, cultural events and concepts – in its anthropological sense – which go beyond football area.

After tracking the course of this participation, we have especially tried to understand how the football policy in Morocco, with the Royal Moroccan Football Federation, and coach Walid Regraki, could correlate the contradictory identities and different cultures of the national team players in one identity and affiliation. First, to be one unit on the field despite the linguistic and cultural difference. Second, to achieve positive results and going in the competition as far as possible. Moreover, we tracked the development of some concepts came in Walid Ragragui's speech, which had a great impact on the fans and the players as well.

Methodology:

In this methodological framework, we have taken a clear epistemological posture, as we relied specifically on an analytical inductive reasoning. (Bernard, 2011, p7) In particular, we have limited only to the theoretical side of previous socio–anthropological studies and theories on this subject. As well, to analyze and debate them according to new perceptions. Otherwise, we have tried to approach the subject based on an historicism vision, which brings us closer more precisely to understand the context of using these concepts. Notably, during the participation of the Moroccan national team in the last World Cup.

The importance of the study:

The importance of this theoretical research lies in the fact that it discusses the topic of sports far from what is usual for researchers in this specialty. Most of the research related to the topic of sports is either based on a physical or technical perspective. What distinguishes this research is that it combines the field of anthropology and sociology according to the context of the production of the act or phenomenon studied, that gives the subject a new angle of view. This new approach combines the social side with the physical and technical side, because sport has become today a field for human studies and is no longer limited to physical sciences.

The study aims:

This article aims to understand some of the socio–anthropological dimensions of a group of events, that clearly emerged during the participation of the Moroccan national team in the World Cup in Qatar,

especially its impact on the collective system of players, and on the public in general. In addition, we dismantled some conceptual contradictions that came in the speech of Coach Walid Al-Rakraki, which resonated eloquently with the followers and raised a set of conceptual questions: How can national identity be achieved in light of the existence of cultural pluralism in the Moroccan national team, and other fundamental questions that we will discuss in the following paragraphs.

2) The anthropological perspective

Despite the essential role that sport plays in people's lives, this practice has not entered the circle of interest of human studies in general, and anthropology field in particular. And as an evolution of that. The Anthropology of Sport, published in 2020 by Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell and Thomas F.Carter, was among the books that gave sports a holistic and general concept, in which they indirectly interfere: politics, culture, economics and other concepts.(Besnier, Brownell, Carter, 2020) In the same context, a recent book entitled “Is Sport a Game?”, which is a series of dialogues conducted by the writer François Levonnet with the French anthropologist Philippe Descola; about the transition of sport from the concept of play and pleasure with some simple tribes and societies, to the concept of competition and profit with the modern European societies. (Descola, 2022) .

As a result of that, we can conclude that the sport field can not be explained by what is technical and physical only, but it is necessary to approach this subject according to other disciplines in order to dismantle some sport concepts into a several dimensions, that are directly related to the cultural and social composition of the practitioner.

1– The development of the concept of (Niya) in Moroccan culture and its relationship to the Moroccan national team

the concept of intention/niya is among the words circulated in the popular and religious Moroccan dictionary. Sometimes it takes the meaning of will, and at other times it represents honesty and good intent on the way to reach the desired goal. this concept was clearly linked to the press statements of Moroccan coach Walid Rekragui during the World Cup in Qatar. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss the development of this concept by tracing its linguistic, popular cultural, and religious meaning. And more than that, we will interpret this difference in meaning, and the intended use of this concept by Walid Rekraki, and its relationship to Moroccan culture.

According to the Almaany dictionary, "niya" means the act of will, it expresses a person's desire to perform an action. This linguistic interpretation shares the same meaning with the religious interpretation, except that the last one considers the "niya" as a basic condition that individuals must perform before embarking on a specific thing in order for God to bless this act. (Reported by Al Boukhary in his Sahih n°0001)

In the same context, and somewhat differently from the religious and linguistic definition of the concept, we note through our experience of traditional popular culture, which represents an important percentage of the general knowledge of Moroccans. The intention/niya leads us with certainty to believe in something positive will happen in the future, although there are no guarantees on that. And more than that, the condition for intention/niya is to put trust in someone or something without hesitation, as it stated in

some popular proverbs: <<Make an intention and lie down with the snake>>. Although it is cultural, it is associated with religious interpretation as well, especially in the aspect related to individuals' belief in God's ability to help them to achieve their goals.

To connect these different meanings, we must understand the context and reasons for producing this concept again with Coach Walid Al-Rakraki. Unlike the others one, who considered that the concept includes all people without distinction. More precisely, Walid Al-Rakraki used this concept to express, first, the lack of confidence of some people in his talent and capabilities as a young coach, who takes over the position of the national team manager. This suspicion somewhat disturbs the work of the coach and his ability to achieve good results. Second, and in order to dispel this confusion, Walid employed the word "Niya" as a message from him to these people to trust him and the players. This discourse, according to our analysis, was not directed at all Moroccans, but only at those nihilists. In other words, the concept of "Niya" means to give the opportunity in good faith and not to rush to judgments. We should wait until the end so as not to disturb the coach's work.

In the same frame, but this time in general way, the concept continues to expand to a wide category of people who look down on themselves and see that dreams are difficult to achieve, especially if there is a competitor from a higher social class or belongs to a different race. What is meant by "Niya" in this dimension is believing in dreams and working towards achieving them without feeling inferior or listening to frustrated people. Consequently, these ideas are clearly summarized in the concept of intention/niya. And even more than that, this belief in this concept was

among the contributors to the brilliance of the Moroccan team in the World Cup in Qatar. Because that also had an effect on the players, That made them more confident to go far in the competition.

2- The national identity of the players between homogeneity and heterogeneity.

After examining the concept of intention/*niya* and its various dimensions, we discuss in this axis the study of the national identity of the players and its relationship to performance and positive results. In general, the identity is used to describe the different links between a person and his belonging and sharing with the group the same characteristics as religious, national or ethnic identity. (James, 2015). So the question is: How was homogeneity achieved within the team despite the presence of an important category of players from multiple cultures?

In order to analyze this question, we have to distinguish between two important issues: the first is related to the local cultural identity that each individual player carries, which is characterized by a unique value specificity. And secondly, between the common identity of these players when they meet in the team, so we are faced with a complex identity (Morin, 2002). To illustrate this with a practical example, the observers who follow the Moroccan football public affairs before the advent of Walid Regragui, clearly notice that the federation technical management find a plenty of difficulties to convince some professional Moroccan players to carry the national t-shirt, and even if they managed to do so, the team often doesn't get the desired performance – I am not talking here about all generations –. On the contrary, particularly in Qatar World Cup, the

technical staff of the Moroccan national team was able to create unparalleled homogeneity within the group, something that was reflected in the performance of the players.

In addition, the achievement of homogeneity despite the difference would not have happened, if there was no common identity, regardless of its strength or weakness, but it bears the roots of the family, that is transmitted through socialization, thus becoming an identity parallel to the local cultural identity of the foreign player within the Moroccan national team. Therefore, after some dismantling of this concept and understanding the role played by the common identity in the team's performance and its access to the semi-finals. We can finally conclude that the ability of coach Walid Regraki and the staff played a major role in establishing a common national identity among all the players. From the local identity through the composite identity to the national identity.

3) The sociology perspective

1. Preface

As we have seen in the anthropological approach, cultural identity is enriched through the encounter of identities, such as: the local culture, the family, the socialization, and other identity determinants. In following ideas, we approach the subject from a sociological point of view as a complementary analysis. This interdisciplinary vision, makes the topic more comprehensive. In order to achieve this methodological harmony, We must answer these questions. What is common between sociology and anthropology in this issue? What role did the players' families to raise their

children on the national identity? How do sport achievements contribute to strengthen the social cohesion ?

Marcel Mauss defines sport as a complete social reality, it is a phenomenon in which all institutions of society participate.(mauss,1925) However, this participation does not include everyone. According to Jacques Defrance, There is no equal opportunity in popularizing sports practices. it is a mirror that reflects the development of the social interface in history. (Defrance, 2011) In addition to this conflictive vision, talcott Parsons interprets this practice functionally and considers it as a product of the socialization that the individual receives from the various institutions assigned to this role.

2. Immigrant families and education on national identity.

Undoubtedly, the family has a great influence in shaping the various aspects of an individual's personality, from which they derive their habits, morals, and original identities. (Sarhanne, 1982) This transfer of values was considered by Abd al-Malik Sayyad, specifically in his work “the Double Absence”, he monitored the immigrant’s social identity as expressing the path of the immigrant and his family from the country of immigration –the point of departure– to the receiving country –the host society–. In order to understand how this dual identity is formed, we must have a deep understanding of the historical, social and cultural paths of the families. According to Sayyad, it means the enthusiasm and permanent longing to return home, due to the presence of feelings of affiliation that the immigrant received from his own family. (Sayad, 1999).

Furthermore, the immigrant falls into a state of contradiction between the local culture where he lives and with his family culture at the same time. In this sense, he does not belong to the original identity, nor does he belong to the new culture. He stands in a middle ground where it is difficult for him to choose to belong to any of these identities. And more than that, especially in football context, when the Moroccan Federation invites immigrant players to play with the national team, they fall into the same circle between the family's choice and their personal goals, and in most cases families have a great influence on their children to choose the original identity.

After talking about the concept of double absence in the identity of the immigrant, we will discuss in this paragraph the connection of this concept with the composite identity of some Moroccan players. At the outset, we can consider that this structure at the level of belonging weakens the ability of the Moroccan team to homogeneity. Instead of speaking in one language, there are three or four languages. Language here is a carrier of culture, and every cultural difference within the group will weaken its homogeneity and performance on the field.

And to solve the heterogeneity in the group, the Moroccan Federation contracted with coach Walid Regraki who lived the culture of immigrant players, and knowing also the Moroccan culture when he was a coach for Al-Fath and Wydad Athletic. This rich experience, helped him to understand different cultures and mentalities, so thanks to his ability to communicate in a several languages that unite the group in a common culture, which we call "adverbial co-culture". In this sense, the coach was able to unify the

goals of the players by playing for the group, for the country, and then for themselves, thus uniting their goals on a common identity.

3. Football and social cohesion

There have been many definitions of the concept of social cohesion among sociologist researchers, but an important group of them agree that the term is used to express cases in which individuals are linked by common social and cultural ties. (Aljaouhari, 1998, p99) In the same context, Emile Durkheim linked this concept in his book "social work division" to the concept of mechanical and organic solidarity, which are followed at the level of small societies, and urban societies, that each of these societies has special links that distinguish it and maintain its cohesion.

In the context of the Qatar World Cup, the positive results achieved by the Moroccan team after his long road to the semi-finals of the tournament, played a set of social goals. it received great support from Africans, Arabs and a large group of sympathetic countries. As for the internal level, the Moroccan national team was able to achieve a common denominator between the various groups and social classes of Moroccans. The slogan of unity and solidarity was stronger than thinking about Corona crisis and the high cost of living. What mattered to a wide range of people at that time was the victory of the team, it made them forget all the daily problems.

Besides, and especially before the Moroccan matches, there was a large percentage of females cheering the national team in cafes, restaurants, and homes. This brilliance encouraged, on the one hand, females to enter the world of football, and on the other hand, it played a

major role in accepting the female presence in cafes in abundance. Which was not normal for everyone. These historic victories contributed greatly, according to our analysis, to build the generalization of watching football for both sexes, as well as males accept the presence of females in cafes for encouragement. According to this gender analysis, we can consider that football contributes strongly to the creation of new social ties, whether between the various classes of society, or between the individuals themselves.

4) Conclusion

As a result, we can conclude that sports, especially football results, can not be explained only by the technical side of the game, but we must also focus on socio-anthropological factors in order to obtain a comprehensive analysis of this sporting phenomenon. To this end, the socio-anthropologists must open up to this field as one of the human phenomena in which a group of sciences overlap, so that it does not remain a monopoly on the technical and physical approach. Moreover, this article summarizes a fundamental idea that lies mainly in the problem of the complex identity, between the local culture and the foreign culture. So the central idea of this article lies in the ability of the technical team, led by Walid Rekraki, to reconcile the enactment of these different identities in order to invest them in positive results on the field.

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15. Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari, Sahih Al-Bukhari, Al-Jamii Al-Musnad Al-Sahih Al-Bukhari from the affairs of the Messenger of God, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, his Sunnah and his days (in Arabic).